

LITERARY TABLET.

Vol. IV.]

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ORIGINAL.

FOR THE LITERARY TABLET.

MODERN ESSAYS.

—*Decipit*

*Frons prima multos, rara mens intelligit
Quod interiore condidit cura angulo.*

"The tinsel glitter and the spacious mien
Delude the most; few pry behind the scene."

THOSE, who are conversant in English and American literature, must have remarked a striking dissimilarity between the writings of English authors, who flourished a half century ago, and the innumerable productions of every description, which are continually pouring forth into the world on this side of the Atlantic. Although in every species of composition this dissimilarity of style and manner is displayed in a certain degree, yet in none is it so peculiarly evinced, as in that, which comes under the general denomination of *essays*. The large and celebrated collection, which bears the appellation of the British Classics, and which is clearly the offspring of genius, has been thought by the most distinguished ornaments of literature, to furnish a copious fund of examples of every excellency in this kind of writing. The elegant simplicity and instructive precepts of the Spectator, the majestic periods and dignified sentiment of the Rambler, and the free, unstudied style and lively description, which mark the effusions of Goldsmith, must so long as sound judgment and correct taste continue to be cultivated, be read, admired and imitated.

But this, to draw a just conclusion from present appearances, cannot long be realized in American literature. True criticism and refined taste seem almost to be expelled from its pale. Those principles, those admirable specimens of the highest excellency in composition, which were so carefully inculcated by Addison, by Steele, by Johnson, and by many of their successors, are made to give place to a profuse ornament, an empty bombast, or a vain affectation of extensive learning. Are not these the certain indications of a corruption of taste? Surely its degeneracy, its evident dissimilarity to those writings, which flowed from the pens of the greatest critics, that have adorned the eighteenth century, afford but too strong a corroboration of the fact. To the standards of English prose, it forms a contrast. It is not confined to a few—it is a general characteristic.

From the first periodical publications in the country down to the grovelling newspaper, from the most distinguished Universities to the petty Academy, this spirit for figurative

writing and bombastic nonsense, has a general prevalence. The man of genius, as well as the servile imitator, is often touched with the infection. An eagerness for becoming authors, for appearing in print is no less general nor less ridiculous. This produces innumerable swarms of *ephemeræ* called *orations*, which continually infest the literary world—a great part are at best but *monstrous births*, and ninety in a hundred "*fall still born from the press*." In these, that jargon of empty declamation, those strained metaphors, those extravagant flights of fancy, which mark a want of judgment, and (I had almost said) in some instances a want of common sense, are frequently exhibited to public view.

Such being the state of literature, some method to restrain the frenzy for *authorship*, to effect, if possible a reformation in the prevailing taste for writing, to free it from corruptions, and bring it back to Classic purity must be salutary in its consequences, and grateful to every scientific mind. Mankind at large are not all critics, nor adequate to judge of the merits of a production; but when a publication appears which carries with it a "tinsel glitter and spacious mien," although calculated neither to inform nor enlighten the understanding, they are too often ready to lavish unbounded praise on the author, and become the dupes of his insidious designs.

To remedy these evils, undertakings have been formed and carried into operation—one in particular in a neighboring state, on the plan both of original and selected essays, and a review of other publications. Public expectation in favor of this work was highly raised. It seemed to be of that kind, which was greatly wanted—adapted to promote the cause of literature and science. But if its merits be duly appreciated, the object originally proposed, I think, is far from being answered. The cure will be equally fatal with the disease. It may indeed have some effect in causing writers to be more cautious of submitting every thing indiscriminately to the public eye; but while censuring others for bombast or any of the faults of writing, it not unfrequently discovers in itself a display of pedantry, a vanity of literary knowledge, equally censurable, and disgusting to the judicious reader. The remarks, here particularly made, are merely suggested as the opinion of the writer from his acquaintance with the subject of them—for their truth and correctness, those well informed on the subject will readily determine.

The greatest and most effectual means of inculcating a correct style of writing and of effecting a reformation in the prevailing

taste, certainly lies in the Universities, in the seminaries of learning. Periodical works may, indeed, have an influence, but it must be small, when compared with that, which gives to the youthful mind its first impressions. It is easier to alter the growth of the tree while young, than after it has arrived to the maturity of strength. To our seminaries of learning then, we must look for the origin of those habits of writing, which may characterize its members. Here the tyro in science imbibes those precepts, which continue to direct him in a measure through life. Here he seeks for those rules, for those precepts, which he may with safety, follow, as the most salutary guide in his education. Much, therefore, depends on the instructors in Universities—far more, if we judge from appearances, than is generally believed. It certainly lies in their power to form, in a great degree, a correct taste in their pupils. If thro' a want of judgment in them false principles or bad habits of writing be imbibed, they alone are culpable—or, if through the negligence of instructors, they refuse to correct the errors of their pupils, they are equally answerable for the consequences, and justly liable to all the censure, that may be heaped on their shoulders. JASON.

SELECTIONS.

The following address delivered by Doct. DODD, who was executed for forgery, is supposed to be from the pen of the great Doct. Johnson.

"MY LORD,

"I now stand before you a dreadful example of human infirmity. I entered upon public life with the expectations common to young men whose education has been liberal, and whose abilities have been flattered; and when I became a clergyman, I considered myself as not impairing the dignity of the order. I was not an idle, nor, I hope, an useless minister: I taught the truths of Christianity with the zeal of conviction, and the authority of innocence. My labours were approved—my pulpit became popular; and, I have reason to believe, that of those who heard me, some have been preserved from sin, and some have been reclaimed.—Condescend, my lord, to think, if these considerations aggravate my crime, how much they must embitter my punishment! Being distinguished and elevated by the confidence of mankind, I had too much confidence in myself, and thinking my integrity, what others thought it, established in sincerity, and fortified by religion, I did not consider the danger of vanity, nor suspect the deceitfulness of my own heart. The day of conflict came, in which temptation seized and overwhelmed

me ! I committed the crime, which I entreat your lordship to believe that my conscience hourly represents to me in its full bulk of mischief and malignity. Many have been overpowered by temptation, who are now among the penitent in heaven ! To an act now waiting the decision of vindictive justice, I will not presume to oppose the counterbalance of almost thirty years (a great part of the life of man) passed in exciting and exercising charity—in relieving such distresses as I now feel—in administering those consolations which I now want. I will not otherwise extenuate my offence, than by declaring, what I hope will appear to many, and what many circumstances make probable, that I did not intend finally to defraud : nor will it become me to apportion my own punishment, by alledging that my sufferings have been not much less than my guilt. I have fallen from reputation, which ought to have made me cautious, and from a fortune, which ought to have given me content. I am sunk at once into poverty and scorn : my name and my crime fill the ballads in the streets ; the sport of the thoughtless, and the triumph of the wicked ! It may seem strange, my lord, that, remembering what I have lately been, I should still wish to continue what I am : but contempt of death, how speciously soever it may mingle with heathen virtues, has nothing in it suitable to christian penitence. Many motives impel me to beg earnestly for life. I feel the natural horror of a violent death, the universal dread of untimely dissolution. I am desirous to recompence the injury I have done to the clergy, to the world, and to religion, and to efface the scandal of my crime, by the example of my repentance ; but, above all, I wish to die with thoughts more composed, and calmer preparation. The gloom and confusion of a prison, the anxiety of a trial, the horrors of suspense, and the inevitable vicissitudes of passion, leave not the mind in a due disposition for the holy exercises of prayer, and self-examination. Let not a little life be denied me, in which I may, by meditation and contrition, prepare myself to stand at the tribunal of Omnipotence, and support the presence of that judge, who shall distribute to all according to their works—who will receive and pardon the repenting sinner, and from whom the merciful shall obtain mercy ! For these reasons, my lords, amidst shame and misery, I yet wish to live ; and most humbly implore, that I may be recommended by your lordship to the clemency of his majesty."

ON LETTER WRITING.

BY DR. JOHNSON.

"IT was the wisdom," says Seneca, "of ancient times, to consider what is most useful as most illustrious." If this rule be applied to works of genius, scarcely any species of composition deserves more to be cultivated than the epistolary style, since none is of more various or frequent use, through the whole subordination of human life.

It has yet happened that, among the numerous writers which our nation has produced, equal perhaps always in force and genius, and of late in elegance and accuracy, to those of any other country, very few have endeavored to distinguish themselves by the publication of letters, except such as were written in the discharge of public trusts, and during the transaction of great affairs ; which, though they afford precedents to the minister, and memorials to the historian, are of no use as examples of the familiar style, or models of private correspondence.

If it be inquired, by foreigners, how this deficiency has happened in the literature of a country, where all indulge themselves with so little danger in speaking and writing, may we not, without either bigotry or arrogance, inform them, that it must be imputed to our contempt of trifles, and our due sense of the dignity of the public ? We do not think it reasonable to fill the world with volumes, from which nothing can be learned, nor expect that the employments of the busy, or the amusements of the gay, should give way to the narratives of our private affairs, complaints of absence, expressions of fondness, or declarations of fidelity.

A slight perusal of the innumerable letters by which the wits of France have signalized their names, will prove that other nations need not be discouraged from the like attempts, by the consciousness of inability ; for surely it is not very difficult to aggravate trifling misfortunes, to magnify familiar incidents, repeat adulatory professions, accumulate servile hyperboles, and produce all that can be found in the despicable remains of Voiture and Scarron.

Yet as much of life must be passed in affairs considerable only by their frequent occurrence, and much of the pleasure, which our condition allows, must be produced by giving elegance to trifles, it is necessary to learn how to become little, without becoming mean, to maintain the necessary intercourse of civility, and fill up the vacuities of actions, by agreeable appearances. It had therefore been of advantage, if such of our writers as have excelled in the art of decorating insignificance, had supplied us with a few sallies of innocent gaiety, effusions of honest tenderness, or exclamations of unimportant hurry.

Precept has generally been posterior to performance. The art of composing works of genius has never been taught but by the example of those who performed it by the natural vigor of imagination, and rectitude of judgment. As we have few letters, we have likewise few criticisms upon the epistolary style. The observation with which Walth has introduced his pages of inanity, are such as give him little claim to the rank assigned him by Dryden among the critics—"Letters," says he, "are intended as resemblances of conversation, and the chief excellencies of conversation, are good-humour and good-breeding."—This remark, equally valuable

for its novelty and propriety, he dilates and enforces with an appearance of complete acquiescence in his own discovery.

No man was ever in doubt about the moral qualities of a letter. It has been always known, that he who endeavors to please must appear pleased, and he who would not provoke rudeness, must not practice it. But the question among those who establish rules for an epistolary performance is, how gaiety or civility may be properly expressed ; as among the critics in history, it is not contested whether truth ought to be preserved, but by what mode of diction it is best adorned.

As letters are written on all subjects, in all states of mind, they cannot be properly reduced to settled rules, or described by any single characteristic ; and we may safely disentangle our minds from critical embarrassments, by determining, that a letter has no peculiarity but its form, and nothing is to be refused admission, which would be proper in any other method of treating the same subject. The qualities of the epistolary style most frequently required, are ease and simplicity, an even flow of unlaboured diction, and an artless arrangement of obvious sentiments. But these directions are no sooner applied to use, than their scantiness and imperfection become evident. Letters are written to the great and to the mean, to the learned and the ignorant, at rest and in distress, in sport and in passion. Nothing can be more improper, than ease and laxity of expression, when the importance of the subject impresses solicitude, or the dignity of the person exacts reverence.

That letters should be written with strict conformity to nature, is true, because nothing but conformity to nature can make any composition beautiful or just. But it is natural to depart from familiarity of language upon occasions not familiar. Whatever elevates the sentiments will consequently raise the expression ; whatever fills up with hope or terror, will produce some perturbation of images, and some figurative distortions of phrase.—Wherever we are studious to please, we are afraid of trusting our first thoughts, and endeavor to recommend our opinion by studied ornaments, accuracy of method, and elegance of style.

If the personages of the comic scene be allowed by Horace, to raise their language in the transports of anger, to the turgid vehemence of tragedy, the epistolary writer may likewise, without censure, comply with the varieties of his matter. If great events are to be related, he may, with all the solemnity of an historian, deduce them from their causes, connect them with their concomitants, and trace them to their consequences. If a disputed position is to be established, or a remote principle to be investigated, he may detail his reasonings with all the nicety of syllogistic method. If a menace is to be averted, or a benefit implored, he may, without any violation of the edicts of criticism, call every power of rhetoric to his assistance, and

try every inlet, at which love or pity enters the heart.

Letters, that have no other end than the entertainment of the correspondents, are more properly regulated by critical precepts, because the matter and style are equally arbitrary; and rules are more necessary, as there is a larger power of choice. In letters of this kind, some conceive art graceful, and others think negligence amiable; some model them by the sonnet, and will allow them no means of delighting but the soft lapse of calm melliflence; others adjust them by the epigram, and expect pointed sentences and forcible periods. The one party considers exemption from faults, as the height of excellence, the other looks upon neglect of excellence as the most disgusting fault; one avoids censure, the other aspires to praise; one is always in danger of insipidity, the other continually on the brink of affectation.

When the subject has no intrinsic dignity, it must necessarily owe its attractions to artificial embellishments, and may catch at all advantages which the art of writing can supply. He that, like Pliny, sends his friend a portion for his daughter, will, without Pliny's eloquence or address, find means of exciting gratitude and securing acceptance; but he that has no present to make but a garland, a ribbon, or some petty curiosity, must endeavor to recommend it by his manner of giving it.

The purpose for which letters are written, when no intelligence is communicated, or business transacted, is to preserve in the minds of the absent, either love or esteem; to excite love, we must impart pleasure, and to raise esteem, we must discover abilities. Pleasure will generally be given, as abilities are displayed by scenes of imagery, points of conceit, unexpected fallies, and artful compliments. Trifles always require exuberance of ornament; the building which has no strength, can be valued only for the grace of its decorations. The pebble must be polished with care, which hopes to be valued as a diamond; and words ought surely to be laboured, when they are intended to stand for things.

LUXURY.

Examine the history of any country remarkable for opulence and wisdom, and you will find that they never would have been wise had they not been luxurious; you will find poets, philosophers, and even patriots marching in luxury's train. The reason is obvious; we then only are curious after knowledge, when we find it connected with sensual happiness. The senses ever point out the way, and reflection comments upon the discovery. Inform a native of the desert of Kobi, of the exact measure of the parallax of the moon, he finds no satisfaction at all in the information; he wonders how any could take such pains and lay out such treasures, in order to solve so useless a difficulty; but connect it with his happiness, by shewing, that it improves navigation, that, by such

an investigation he may have a warmer coat, a better gun or a finer knife, and he is instantly in raptures at so great an improvement.—In short, we desire to know only what we desire to possess; and whatever we may say against it, luxury adds the spur to curiosity and gives us a desire of becoming more wise.

GOLDSMITH.

A letter written by the Ambassador of Bantam, in the reign of Charles the second.

MASTER,

The people, where I now am, have tongues farther from their hearts than from London to Bantam, and thou knowest the inhabitants of one of these places do not know what is done in the other. They call thee and thy subjects, barbarians, because we speak what we mean, and account themselves a civilized people, because they speak one thing and mean another: truth they call barbarity, and falsehood politeness. On my first landing, one who was sent from the king of this place to meet me, told me, That he was extremely sorry for the storm I had met with just before my arrival. I was troubled to hear him grieve and afflict himself on my account; but in less than a quarter of an hour he smiled, and was as merry as if nothing had happened. Another who came with him, told me, by my interpreter, He should be glad to do me any service that lay in his power. On which I desired him to carry one of my portmanteaus for me; but, instead of serving me according to his promise, he laughed, and bid another do it. I lodged, the first week, at the house of one, who desired me to think myself at home, and to consider his house as my own. Accordingly, I the next morning began to knock down one of the walls of it, in order to let in the fresh air, and had packed up some of the household goods, of which I intended to have made thee a present; but the false varlet no sooner saw me falling to work, but he sent word to desire me to give over, for that he would have no such doings in his house. I had not long been in this nation, before I was told by one, for whom I had asked a certain favor from the chief of the king's servants, whom they here call the Lord Treasurer, that I had eternally obliged him. I was so surprised at his gratitude, that I could not forbear saying, what service is there which one man can do for another, that can oblige him to all eternity! However, I only asked him for my reward, that he would lend me his eldest daughter during my stay in this country; but I quickly found that he was as treacherous as the rest of his countrymen. At my first going to court, one of the great men almost put me out of countenance, by asking ten thousand pardons of me for only treading by accident on my toe. They call this kind of lie a compliment; for when they are civil to a great man, they tell him untruths, for which thou wouldst order any of thy officers of state to receive an hundred blows upon his foot. I do not know how I shall negotiate any thing with this

people, since there is so little credit to be given to them. When I go to see the King's scribe, I am generally told that he is not at home, though perhaps I saw him go into his house almost the very moment before. Thou wouldst fancy that the whole nation are physicians, for the first question they always ask me, is, How I do? I have this question put to me above a hundred times a day. Nay, they are not only thus inquisitive after my health, but wish it in a most solemn manner with a full glass in their hands, every time I sit with them at table, though at the same time they would persuade me to drink their liquors in such quantities as I have found by experience will make me sick. They often pretend to pray for thy health also in the same manner; but I have more reason to expect it from the goodness of thy constitution, than the sincerity of their wishes. May thy slave escape in safety from this double-tongued race of men, and live to lay himself once more at thy feet in the royal city of Bantam.

Spectator.

ANECDOTE OF POPE.

Pope, who, whatever his other good qualities might be, certainly was not much troubled with good nature, was one evening at Burton's Coffee-house, when he and a set of literati were poring over a manuscript of the Greek comic poet Aristophanes, in which they found a passage they could not comprehend. As they talked pretty loud, a young man who stood by the fire, heard their conference, and begged that he might be permitted to look at the passage. "O!" said Pope, sarcastically, "by all means, pray let the young gentleman look at it." On which he took up the book, and considering a while, said, that there only wanted a note of interrogation to render the whole intelligible: which was really the case. "And pray master," said Pope, piqued perhaps at being outdone, "what is a note of interrogation?" "A note of interrogation," replied the youth, with a look of the utmost contempt, "is a little crooked thing that asks questions!" It is said, however, that Pope was so delighted with this witticism, that he forgave the sarcasm on his person.

THE TAYLOR AND HIS WORK.

A Taylor having mended a pair of breeches for one of his customers, was carrying them home, when he saw a funeral pass by, attended by an apothecary whom he knew. "So sir," said he to him, "I see you are carrying your work home, as well as I."

Inscription on a sign-board, by a Watchmaker at Oxford.

Here are fabricated, and renovated, trochiliac horologies, portable and permanent, linguaculous or taciturnal; whose circumgrations are performed by internal spiral elastic or extensive pendulous plumbages; diminutives, simple or compound, invested with aurent or argent integuments.

SELECTED POETRY.

ATHLONE CASTLE,

A LEGENDARY TALE.

High on a rock, where not a shrub
Adorned the frowning stone,
In Gothick grandeur rose sublime
The towers of proud Athlone!

Amid a wild and rugged waste,
The gloomy mansion stood;
Before it spread the barren plain,
Behind it roared the flood,

And still when rosy morning dawned
Across the eastern ground,
And when the dark grey evening threw
Her deepening shades around,

Sad Margaret to the turret hied,
That overlook'd the wild,
There watched and wept,—and never hope
The anxious hours beguiled:

For many, many a tedious week,
And many a month had flown,
Since her lov'd Lord, at Honour's call,
Had quitted proud Athlone!

The chill blast howled, the bittern screamed!
The livid light'ning flashed!
The thunder roared, and down the rock,
The torrent hoarser dashed!

Sad Margaret left her sleepless bed,
With trembling terror wild,
She hastened to the turret drear,
And clasped her sleepless child!

The savage blast had rudely torn
The casement from the wall;
And at her feet, with pond'rous crash,
She saw the ruin fall!

To the defenceless breach she went,
Nor moon, nor stars appeared,
And through the wind and torrent's roar,
The thunder loud was heard.

Yet Margaret looked across the plain,
To see her Lord appear!
And tried amid the whistling winds,
His well known voice to hear.

But thick the damp fog spread around,
And nought was to be seen,
Save when the lightning's lurid flash
Illum'd the savage scene.

Sudden the misty fog was gone,
The atmosphere was clear'd!
And by the radiance of the moon,
The distant hills appear'd.

Extending numerous o'er the plain,
She saw two marshal bands;
Their crimson banners wav'd in air,
Steel glittered in their hands.

She heard the deaf'ning din of arms,
She heard the victor's shout;
She heard the shrieks of deep distress,
From the defeated rout!

The fog again o'erspread the plain,
The hostile bands were gone,
And on the turret's mouldering walls
Blue trailing wildfire shone!

And now a hollow voice was heard
Of deep sepulchral tone,
Loud it exclaimed, denouncing wo,
"Deep wo to proud Athlone."

And though the mist still spread around
Its damp unwholesome sway,
She plainly saw, athwart the gloom,
A funeral's dark array.

Dimly the tapers gleamed,
The funeral toll'd,
"The waters shrieked,"
"The flood ran cold."

"Ah! my love, where art thou gone?
What mystery shrouds thy fate?
Ah, me! the funeral hither comes,
It stops before the gate."

She gaz'd, she shriek'd, for as she gaz'd,
She saw upon the bier,
All covered o'er with ghastly wounds,
Her husband's corpse appear!

At once, the phantoms vanished all,
The howling tempest ceased,
And Margaret prest with wilder love,
Her infant to her breast.

The infant screamed, but Margaret drowned
Its voice with deeper tone;
"Ah never more my love shall come,"
She cried, "to proud Athlone."

"Nor ever more my little babe,
Shalt thou thy father see,
What wilt thou do, thou helpless child,
Deprived of him and me?"

"I feel, I feel my heartstrings burst;"
Sad Margaret shivering cried:
She sunk upon the clay-cold ground,
Kissed her sweet babe—and died.

TO A YOUNG LADY.

Polly from me, tho' now a love-sick youth,
Nay tho' a poet hear the voice of truth!
Polly you're not a beauty, yet you're pretty,
So grave, yet so gay; so silly, yet, so witty,
A heart of softness with a tongue of satire
You've cruelty, yet, e'en with that good nature.
Now you are free and now reserv'd awhile,
Now a forc'd frown betrays a willing smile.
Reproach'd for absence, yet, your fight deny'd
My tongue you silence, yet my silence chide.
How would you praise me if your sex defame,
Yet should they praise me, grow jealous and ex-
claim,
If I despair with some kind look you bless,
But if I hope, at once all hope suppress.
You scorn, yet, should my passion change or fail,
Too late you'd whimper out a softer tale,
You love, yet, from you lover's wish retire,
Doubt, yet discern; deny and yet desire.
Such Polly are your sex, part truth, part fic-
tion,
Some thought, much whim, and all a contri-
diction.

[Savage.]

THE PASSION FLOWER

TO MIRA.

Behold yon charming flow'r my fair,
Mira may find a moral there!
Expanding to the orb of day,
As if enamour'd of its ray;
It lives but in the sunny glow,
And nourish'd thence the blossom's blow.

Thus, Mira, of thy kindness born,
Love seem'd a rose without a thorn
Delighted in this breast it grew,
Owing each vermeil tint to you:
My heart confess'd thy genial pow'r;
Thy smile, like sunshine to the flow'r.
But see how fades the flow'r away
With the last tinge of parting day;
Its glossy colour instant flies,
Extinct are all its thousand dyes.

Thus, Mira, thy diminish'd pow'r,
Still bears allusion to the flow'r;
Tho' love's soft gales were in thy sighs
And all his sunshine in thine eyes,
That love withdrawn which one possessed,
And reign'd th' enthusiast of thy breast;
Farewell to all that gave it birth,
And, like the Sun, remov'd from earth;
No more I own thy beauty's pow'r,
For thou hast kill'd the *Passion Flow'r*.

SHEPHERD'S SONG.

We that have known no greater state,
Than this we live in, praise our fate:
For courtly silks in cares are spent,
When country's russet breed's content.
The power of sceptres we admire,
But sheephooks for our use desire:
Simple and low is our condition,
For here with us is no ambition;
We with the sun our flocks unfold,
Whose rising makes their fleeces gold:
Our music from the birds we borrow,
They bidding us, we them, good morrow.
Our habits are but coarse and plain,
Yet they defend from wind and rain;
As warm too in an equal eye,
As those bestain'd in scarlet dye:
Those that have plenty, wear, we see,
But one at once, and so do we.
The shepherd with his homespun lafs,
As many merry hours doth pass,
As courtiers with their costly girls,
Though richly deck'd in gold, and pearls;
And though but plain to purpose woo,
Nay oftentimes with less danger too.
Those that delight in dainties store,
One stomach feed at once, no more:
And when with homely fare we feast,
With us it doth as well digest;
And many times we better speed,
For our wild fruits no surfeits breed.
If we sometimes the willow wear,
By subtle swains, that do forswear;
We wonder whence it comes, and fear,
They've been at court, and learnt it there.

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